1	ROB BONTA Attorney General of California MATTHEW M. DAVIS Supervising Deputy Attorney General JASON J. AHN Deputy Attorney General State Bar No. 253172 600 West Broadway, Suite 1800	
2		
3		
4		
5	San Diego, CA 92101 P.O. Box 85266	
6	San Diego, CA 92186-5266 Telephone: (619) 738-9433	
7	Facsimile: (619) 645-2061	
8	Attorneys for Complainant	
9		
10	BEFORE THE  MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA  DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS	
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12	STATE OF	CALIFORNIA
13	In the Matter of the Accusation Against:	Case No. 800-2019-060962
14	QUEZALSOL FELIPE CHACON-LOPEZ, M.D.	ACCUSATION
15	Patty Mapples Em Dept. 4647 Zion Ave.	
16	San Diego, CA 92120-2507	
17	Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate No. A 107435,	
18	Respondent.	
19		_ <b>_</b>
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21	<u>PARTIES</u>	
22	1. William Prasifka (Complainant) brings this Accusation solely in his official capacity	
23	as the Executive Director of the Medical Board of California, Department of Consumer Affairs	
24	(Board).	
25	2. On or about April 29, 2009, the Board issued Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate	
26	No. A 107435 to Quetzalsol Felipe Chacon-Lopez, M.D. (Respondent). The Physician's and	
27	Surgeon's Certificate was in full force and effect at all times relevant to the charges brought	
28	herein and will expire on October 31, 2022, unless renewed.	
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### **JURISDICTION**

- 3. This Accusation is brought before the Board, under the authority of the following laws. All section references are to the Business and Professions Code (Code) unless otherwise indicated.
  - 4. Section 2227 of the Code states:
  - (a) A licensee whose matter has been heard by an administrative law judge of the Medical Quality Hearing Panel as designated in Section 11371 of the Government Code, or whose default has been entered, and who is found guilty, or who has entered into a stipulation for disciplinary action with the board, may, in accordance with the provisions of this chapter:
    - (1) Have his or her license revoked upon order of the board.
  - (2) Have his or her right to practice suspended for a period not to exceed one year upon order of the board.
  - (3) Be placed on probation and be required to pay the costs of probation monitoring upon order of the board.
  - (4) Be publicly reprimanded by the board. The public reprimand may include a requirement that the licensee complete relevant educational courses approved by the board.
  - (5) Have any other action taken in relation to discipline as part of an order of probation, as the board or an administrative law judge may deem proper.
  - (b) Any matter heard pursuant to subdivision (a), except for warning letters, medical review or advisory conferences, professional competency examinations, continuing education activities, and cost reimbursement associated therewith that are agreed to with the board and successfully completed by the licensee, or other matters made confidential or privileged by existing law, is deemed public, and shall be made available to the public by the board pursuant to Section 803.1.
  - 5. Section 2234 of the Code, states:

The board shall take action against any licensee who is charged with unprofessional conduct. In addition to other provisions of this article, unprofessional conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- (a) Violating or attempting to violate, directly or indirectly, assisting in or abetting the violation of, or conspiring to violate any provision of this chapter.
  - (b) Gross negligence.
- (c) Repeated negligent acts. To be repeated, there must be two or more negligent acts or omissions. An initial negligent act or omission followed by a separate and distinct departure from the applicable standard of care shall constitute repeated negligent acts.
  - (1) An initial negligent diagnosis followed by an act or omission medically

appropriate for that negligent diagnosis of the patient shall constitute a single negligent act.

(2) When the standard of care requires a change in the diagnosis, act, or omission that constitutes the negligent act described in paragraph (1), including, but not limited to, a reevaluation of the diagnosis or a change in treatment, and the licensee's conduct departs from the applicable standard of care, each departure constitutes a separate and distinct breach of the standard of care.

" "

# 6. Section 2266 of the Code states:

The failure of a physician and surgeon to maintain adequate and accurate records relating to the provision of services to their patients constitutes unprofessional conduct.

7. Unprofessional conduct under Business and Professions Code section 2234 is conduct which breaches the rules or ethical code of the medical profession, or conduct which is unbecoming a member in good standing of the medical profession, and which demonstrates an unfitness to practice medicine. (*Shea v. Board of Medical Examiners* (1978) 81 Cal.App.3d 564, 575.)

### **COST RECOVERY**

#### 8. Section 125.3 of the Code states:

- (a) Except as otherwise provided by law, in any order issued in resolution of a disciplinary proceeding before any board within the department or before the Osteopathic Medical Board, upon request of the entity bringing the proceeding, the administrative law judge may direct a licensee found to have committed a violation or violations of the licensing act to pay a sum not to exceed the reasonable costs of the investigation and enforcement of the case.
- (b) In the case of a disciplined licensee that is a corporation or a partnership, the order may be made against the licensed corporate entity or licensed partnership.
- (c) A certified copy of the actual costs, or a good faith estimate of costs where actual costs are not available, signed by the entity bringing the proceeding or its designated representative shall be prima facie evidence of reasonable costs of investigation and prosecution of the case. The costs shall include the amount of investigative and enforcement costs up to the date of the hearing, including, but not limited to, charges imposed by the Attorney General.
- (d) The administrative law judge shall make a proposed finding of the amount of reasonable costs of investigation and prosecution of the case when requested pursuant to subdivision (a). The finding of the administrative law judge with regard to costs shall not be reviewable by the board to increase the cost award. The board may reduce or eliminate the cost award, or remand to the administrative law judge if the proposed decision fails to make a finding on costs requested pursuant to subdivision (a).

(OUETZALSOL FELIPE CHACON-LOPEZ, M.D.) ACCUSATION NO. 800-2019-060962

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Patient A with sciatica and prescribed prednisone<sup>2</sup> 20 mg orally twice a day for five (5) days and Norco<sup>3</sup> 5/325 mg orally every six (6) hours as needed for severe pain for 20 tablets.

- 11. On or about June 30, 2017, Patient A was in severe pain and went to Sharp Grossmont Hospital by ambulance. E.H., M.D. treated Patient A, discharging her at approximately 3:16 p.m. with the diagnosis of left hip pain and a prescription for Robaxin<sup>4</sup> 750 mg 2 tablets, three times daily for seven (7) days for a total of 42 tablets for muscle pain. Patient A then contacted the Kaiser call center, requesting an urgent follow-up appointment, stating that she is unable to work due to the pain. Patient A's appointment was scheduled for July 3, 2017.
- 12. On or about July 2, 2017, Patient A first presented to the emergency department at Kaiser Zion Medical Center in San Diego. At the time of this visit, Patient A was a sixty-one (61) year-old female, with a history of childhood tracheostomy,<sup>5</sup> asthma, alcoholic cirrhosis,<sup>6</sup> diabetes

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Prednisone is a steroid, which can be used to treat many diseases and conditions, especially those associated with inflammation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Hydrocodone APAP (Vicodin®, Lortab® and Norco®) is a hydrocodone combination of hydrocodone bitartrate and acetaminophen which was formerly a Schedule III controlled substance pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 11056, subdivision (e), and a dangerous drug pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 4022. On August 22, 2014, the DEA published a final rule rescheduling hydrocodone combination products (HCPs) to schedule II of the Controlled Substances Act, which became effective October 6, 2014. Schedule II controlled substances are substances that have a currently accepted medical use in the United States, but also have a high potential for abuse, and the abuse of which may lead to severe psychological or physical dependence. When properly prescribed and indicated, it is used for the treatment of moderate to severe pain. In addition to the potential for psychological and physical dependence there is also the risk of acute liver failure which has resulted in a black box warning being issued by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA black box warning provides that "Acetaminophen has been associated with cases of acute liver failure, at times resulting in liver transplant and death. Most of the cases of liver injury are associated with use of the acetaminophen at doses that exceed 4000 milligrams per day, and often involve more than one acetaminophen containing product."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Robaxin (Methocarbamol) is a muscle relaxant, which can be used to treat muscle spasms and pain.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Tracheostomy is a hole that surgeons make through the front of the neck and into the windpipe (trachea).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Alcoholic cirrhosis is the destruction of normal liver tissue.

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<sup>7</sup> Diabetes mellitus refers to a group of diseases that result in too much sugar in the blood (high blood glucose).

On or about July 2, 2017, Resident M.L., M.D. documented Patient A's history as "right low back pain radiating to hip and her foot. No numbness. Severe pain for 6 - 7 days. Saw M.D. 5 days ago and prescribed 'only steroids' without improvement. No urine/stool incontinence, groin numbness, or weakness. No recent trauma, history of spinal fracture, fever, chills, or cancer." According to the medical records for this visit, Patient A's pain was reported as severe in the right hip and leg and worsening despite medications. According to the nursing notes, Patient A was in distress. The physical examination noted positive straight leg raise with a "no midline neck tenderness" and "normal right leg sensation" but otherwise no specific mention of the back examination or motor findings are documented. Within the first hour of Patient A's arrival, ice packs were applied and non-narcotic medications were prescribed.

inflammation.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Peripheral neuropathy refers to weakness, numbness, and pain from nerve damage, usually in the hands and feet.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Diabetic ulcers are open wounds or sores usually found on the bottom of the feet.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Hypertension refers to a condition in which the force of the blood against the artery walls is too high (high blood pressure).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Hepatitis C refers to an infection caused by a virus that attacks the liver and leads to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Trochanter refers to any of two bony protuberances by which muscles are attached to the upper part of the thigh bone.

14. On or about July 2, 2017, at approximately 5:49 p.m., approximately one hour after Patient A's arrival, she received her first dose of morphine 13 pain medication, 8 mg IV, every 20 minutes as needed for pain. Within 20 minutes, Patient A was documented as being restless and needing additional pain medications. Approximately two hours after her arrival, Patient A remained in pain. Respondent changed the morphine to hydromorphone 14 and began with 1 mg, then increased to 2 mg every 20 minutes, as needed, for pain. By 3 hours after arrival, Patient A had received multiple doses of narcotics and reported pain of 9 out of 10 in severity. At approximately 10:21 p.m., Patient A was given another dose of hydromorphone 2 mg. Patient A's pulse remained elevated, suggesting she had continued pain and she reported pain level of 7 out of 10, thereafter.

On or about July 2, 2017, at approximately 9:09 p.m., J.S., RN, documented an oxygen saturation on room air of 76%, hypoxia. J.S., RN documented, among other things, "pt [Patient A] appears in no acute distress ... denies shortness of breath, denies dizziness.

Respiratory function intact, lung sounds clear. Moved . . . for better monitoring. Dr. Chacon-Lopez [Respondent] aware. Pt [Patient A] completely asymptomatic for respiratory issues as this time." At approximately 9:15 p.m., Patient A was noted to have an oxygen saturation of 93% on room air and 7 out of 10 on the pain severity scale. Two minutes later, at approximately 9:17 p.m., there is another documentation of 96% oxygen saturation, followed by another dose of . A

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Morphine is a narcotic which can be used to treat moderate to severe pain.

<sup>14</sup> Hydromorphone (Dilaudid®), an opioid analgesic, is a Schedule II controlled substance pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 11055, subdivision (b), and a dangerous drug pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 4022. When properly prescribed and indicated, it is used for the treatment of moderate to severe pain. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has identified hydromorphone, such as Dilaudid®, as a drug of abuse. (Drugs of Abuse, DEA Resource Guide (2011 Edition), at p. 37.) The Federal Drug Administration has issued black box warnings for Dilaudid® which warn about, among other things, addiction, abuse and misuse, and the possibility of life-threatening respiratory distress. The warnings also caution about the risks associated with concomitant use of Dilaudid® with benzodiazepines or other central nervous system (CNS) depressants.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Hypoxia refers to an absence of enough oxygen in the tissues to sustain bodily functions.

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hydromorphone 2 mg IV. At approximately 9:35 p.m., Respondent placed an order for Percocet<sup>16</sup> 5/325 mg for 2 tablets as well as discharge instructions.

16. On or about July 2, 2017, at approximately 9:39 p.m., D.F., RN documented that she prepared discharge instruction with taxi as the mode of transport. She found Patient A supine in bed with discolored lips, and no evidence of her breathing. D.F., RN initiated chest compressions. Code protocols were initiated with CPR, assisted respirations, Epinephine, <sup>17</sup> and Naloxone. Within 10 minutes of being found to be unresponsive, Patient A had a return of spontaneous circulation and was intubated. At approximately 10:15 p.m., Patient A had a brief episode of ventricular arrhythmia, <sup>19</sup> which resolved with amiodarone. There was concern for aspiration, <sup>21</sup> which required antibiotics. The chest x-ray examinations, laboratory studies, and electrocardiograms were performed after the cardiopulmonary arrest. Patient A was eventually stabilized and admitted to the intensive care unit.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Percocet® (oxycodone and acetaminophen), an opioid analgesic, is a Schedule II controlled substance pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 11055, subdivision (b), and a dangerous drug pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 4022. When properly prescribed and indicated, it is used for the management of moderate to moderately severe pain. The Drug Enforcement Administration has identified oxycodone, as a drug of abuse. (Drugs of Abuse, A DEA Resource Guide (2011 Edition), at p. 41.) The Federal Drug Administration has issued a black box warning for Percocet® which warns about, among other things, addiction, abuse and misuse, and the possibility of "life-threatening respiratory distress."

 $<sup>^{17}\,\</sup>mathrm{Epinerphine}$  can be used to treat severe as thma attacks and allergic reactions in an emergency situation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Naloxone is a narcotic which can be used to treat narcotic overdose in an emergency situation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Ventricular arrhythmias are abnormal heart rhythms that make the lower chambers of your heart twitch instead of pump.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Amiodarone can be used to treat heart rhythm problems.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Aspiration refers to the action or process of drawing breath.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> An electrocardiogram records the electrical signals in your heart and is a common and painless test used to quickly detect heart problems and monitor your heart's health.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Cardiopulmonary arrest is the cessation of adequate heart function and respiration and results in death without reversal.

### Medical Documentation

17. Respondent's medical documentation lacked sufficient details regarding key portions of the physical examination(s) of Patient A, which are pertinent to her chief complaint(s), specifically, Patient A's back and musculoskeletal examination. Regarding physical examination of Patient A, Respondent noted, among other things, positive straight leg raise, without specific mention about Patient A's ability to move her hip for abduction,<sup>24</sup> adduction,<sup>25</sup> or hip flexion. There was no mention of motor findings in the knee and foot or whether there was asymmetry in the legs. While the documentation stated, "no midline neck tenderness," there was no specific mention of step-offs or midline tenderness of the lumbar or sacral spine, or tenderness in the sciatic notch, especially given the concern for sciatica. In addition, documentation of "normal right leg sensation" is present, without any mention about deep tendon reflexes.

# Management of Patient A's Lower Back Pain

- 18. In the medical documentation regarding Patient A's lower back pain, it is noted, among other things, "Right sciatica pain. No symptoms worrisome for spinal stenosis. No red flags of back pain including fever, cancer history, history of traumatic injury. Pain controlled with multiple doses of intravenous pain medication." This history was inadequate in that it did not contain Patient A's fall from a ladder, a few days prior. The records do not indicate deep tendon reflexes or lumbar spine examination. There is insufficient documentation of the neurologic and musculoskeletal examination(s), if any. Despite the assertion that Patient A's pain was "controlled," Patient A continued to report a pain level of 7 out of 10 in a 10 point pain scale, at approximately 9:15 p.m. on July 2, 2017.
- 19. During the week preceding the July 2, 2017 visit with Respondent, Patient A had multiple medications prescribed to her, including, but not limited to, prednisone, robaxin (muscle relaxant), and opioid analgesic (Norco). While in the ER, Respondent prescribed ketorolac<sup>26</sup>,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Abduction refers to the movement of a limb or other part away from the midline of the body, or from another part.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Adduction refers to the movement of a limb or other part toward the midline of the body or toward another part.

acetaminophen (non-opiate analgesic), and cold compresses. Nevertheless, Patient A's pain was not controlled with these measures and Respondent ordered opioid analgesics for pain control. Despite large doses of narcotics and Patient A's uncontrolled pain, Respondent failed to order imaging studies such as a CT scan<sup>27</sup> and/or MRI.<sup>28</sup>

# Medication Management

20. Prior to presenting to Respondent on or about July 2, 2017, Patient A had been using anti-inflammatory medications, muscle relaxants, and opiates. Respondent began with non-opioid analgesics, ketorolac and acetaminophen and cold compress, then turned to opioids when Patient A's pain was escalating despite these conservative measures. Respondent's first order of narcotics was for Morphine 8 mg IV that was repeated after twenty (20) minutes, then escalating doses of hydromorphone (Dilaudid). Ultimately, Respondent ordered 16 mg of intravenous morphine for Patient A, followed by 7 mg of intravenous hydromorphone over less than four (4) hours. Respondent's doses of morphine and hydromorphone were excessive and higher than the manufacturers' recommendation, and were prescribed in rapid succession without proper monitoring and/or adequate time intervals between the doses, which are needed to achieve maximum benefits of the narcotics.

#### Arranging a Safe Discharge

21. At the time of her discharge from the emergency room, Patient A was sedated due to multiple narcotic medications administered during her emergency department visit on or about July 2, 2017. Respondent failed to arrange a safe discharge of Patient A, by, among other things, failing to admit Patient A for continued monitoring of her respiratory status and/or prolonged monitoring after the peak analgesic window of all of the narcotics had passed.

<sup>26</sup> Ketorolac is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug, which can be used to treat pain.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> A computerized tomography (CT) scan combines a series of x-ray images taken from different angles around your body and uses computer processing to create cross-sectional images (slices) of the bones, blood vessels, and soft tissues inside your body.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is a medical imaging technique used in radiology to form pictures of the anatomy and the physiological processes of the body.

### FOURTH CAUSE FOR DISCIPLINE

### (General Unprofessional Conduct)

26. Respondent has further subjected his Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate No. A 107435 to disciplinary action under sections 2227 and 2234 of the Code, in that he has engaged in conduct which breaches the rules or ethical code of the medical profession, or conduct which is unbecoming of a member in good standing of the medical profession, and which demonstrates an unfitness to practice medicine, as more particularly alleged in paragraphs 9 through 25, above, which are hereby incorporated by reference as if fully set forth herein.

# **PRAYER**

WHEREFORE, Complainant requests that a hearing be held on the matters herein alleged, and that following the hearing, the Medical Board of California issue a decision:

- 1. Revoking or suspending Physician's and Surgeon's Certificate No. A 107435, issued to Respondent Quetzalsol Felipe Chacon-Lopez, M.D.;
- 2. Revoking, suspending or denying approval of Respondent Quetzalsol Felipe Chacon-Lopez, M.D.'s authority to supervise physician assistants and advanced practice nurses;
- 3. Ordering Respondent Quetzalsol Felipe Chacon-Lopez, M.D., to pay the Board the costs of the investigation and enforcement of this case, and if placed on probation, the costs of probation monitoring; and
  - 4. Taking such other and further action as deemed necessary and proper.

DATED: MAR 0 4 2022

WILLIAM PRASIFKA Executive Director

Medical Board of California
Department of Consumer Affairs

جنان,

State of California Complainant

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